Lessons from around the world for engaging students in Research Enriched Learning and Teaching

The ITL recently hosted a visit by Professor Mick Healey from the UK who led three workshops for University staff on strategies for engaging students in Research Enriched Learning and Teaching (RELT). RELT is one of the signature learning experiences identified in the White Paper and these workshops were the first of several activities planned for the coming months to support the university community in further enhancing this aspect of teaching at Sydney.

Two of the workshops were specifically for curriculum leaders from the large generalist faculties of Science and Arts. Participants valued the wealth of knowledge and examples that Mick was able to share, drawing on case studies from all over the world, particularly the US and UK, where undergraduate research has emerged as key element of many curricula in the Arts and Sciences. Participants engaged in lively discussions around the definition of research, the variations in discipline knowledge, the challenges of building connections across programs to progressively develop capability over a degree, and challenges specific to large classes. They also used this opportunity to share ideas with colleagues. Many staff realised they were already using RELT strategies, (but they may not have articulated them as such). From the first year essay on a ‘hot topic’ in the field, to second year students developing their own research proposal, and third year students volunteering as RAs in staff projects; there was a recognition that many current initiatives can be further developed and expanded to other disciplines. See a list of great suggestions here.

If other faculties are interested in hosting similar workshops for curriculum teams in their area the ITL would be very happy to arrange this.

A seminar on leading RELT change in the faculties was also held for the Associate Deans (L&T) group. One of the outputs from this was an impressive list of ‘innovative and feasible’ RELT initiatives. The participants were inspired by the creativity of many of the suggestions. They will provide a valuable basis for further discussion and development in meetings of the ITL Associate Deans (L&T) Group in coming months.

The presentation used in the seminars can be downloaded here and resources are available from RELT site. If you would like to learn more about RELT or would like to arrange for a RELT seminar in your Faculty or School please contact the ITL.